amounts each month over and above the statutory contribution by salaried employees covered under EPF scheme;

(b) whether it is a fact that Government are taking this move to ward off the anticipatory rush of additional deposits from subscribers in the new fiscal year;

(c) whether it is a also a fact that because of the increase in the rate of interest on EPF to 9.5 per cent the EPFO finds it difficult as it is facing Rs. 927.15 crores of deficit; and

(d) if so, Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI K. CHANDRASEKHAR RAO). (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise in view of (a) above.

(c) and (d) The Government has not notified the rate of of interest for the subscribers of employees Provident Fund for 2004-05, so far. Therefore, the issue of deficit of Rs. 927.15 crores does not arise at this stage.

Decline in Unemployment

3173. SHRI SK. KHABIR UDDIN AHMED: Will the Minister of LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that according to I.L.O.global unemployment has shown a decline in 2004; and

(b) if so, the performance of India in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI K. CHANDRASEKHAR RAO): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Figures for 2004 being not available, comparison regarding increase/decrease in unemployment in India can not be made.

Labour Policies Adopted by Foreign Countries

†3174. SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA: Will the Minister of LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that several countries including America and Japan consider the labour policy of the Government of India the main obstacle in the development of the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(c) whether the governments of foreign countries have ascribed the faulty labour policy of the Government of India as the main reasons for the shortfall in the investment; and

(d) if so, whether Government are being pressurized for this?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI K. CHANDRASEKHAR RAO): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

Legislation for Agricultural Workers

3175. SHRI JIBON ROY: Will the Minister of LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have made any assessment of the number of agricultural workers in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof, State-wise;

(c) whether Government have taken any steps to evolve a consensus among States to bring an umbrella legislation for agricultural workers; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI K. CHANDRASEKHAR RAO): (a) and (b) According, to Census 2001, there are about 10.7 crore agricultural workers in the country. The state-wise details are enclosed as Statement (*See* below).

(c) and (d) A proposal of enactment of a comprehensive legislation for agricultural workers has been under consideration of the Government in a long time. The Government have taken several initiatives to evolve a consensus among the States for enactment of proposed legislation. This was discussed at various fora i.e. Indian Labour Conference, State Labour Ministers Conference, all party meetings with CTUs, Employers' Organisation, NGO etc. Still, there are divergent views of the State Governments on the proposed legislation.